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MEOW!

A COMEDY

BY

FANNIE CANNON AND ALICE E. IVES



CHICAGO
T. S. DENISON & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

MEOW!

— 75625
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CHARACTERS.

DAISY DALRYMPLE *A Butterfly*
JESSICA REEVES *A Novelist*

—
TIME—*About Eleven in the Morning.*

—
PLACE—*Jessica Reeves' Writing Room.*
TIME OF PLAYING—*About Twenty Minutes.*

—
COSTUMES—*Modern.*

—
Produced before the Century Theatre Club, New York City.

PROPERTIES.

Flat top desk or table, several chairs, desk telephone, pencil, sheets of paper (as galley proofs), book shelves, books, pictures.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means right of stage; *C.*, center; *R. C.*, right center; *L.*, left; *R. D.*, right door; *L. D.*, left door, etc.; 1 *E.*, first entrance; *U. E.*, upper entrance, etc.; *D. F.*, door in flat, or scene running across the back of the stage; 1 *G.*, first groove, etc. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

—
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MEOW!

SCENE: *The room is an attractive workshop, well furnished with bookshelves, books, some good engravings, and suitable chairs. The one door of entrance is up R.*

JESSICA, dressed for a morning's work at her desk, is hard at work with pencil and sheets of galley proof at a table which is placed a trifle down stage and a little at the left of the stage center. At her right hand is a desk telephone. The telephone bell rings. Frowning at the interruption, JESSICA takes down the receiver.

JESSICA. Hello! Yes. This is Miss Reeves. Yes, I'm hard at work now. Now, my dear Mr. Bartlett, please don't worry. Your printer's demands shall be satisfied. You'll have this the first thing in the morning—Yes, I know—All right—Good-bye. (*She hangs up the receiver and gets back to work again. There is a knock at the door. Impatiently laying down her pencil, she rises, and going to the door, opens it. The vague murmur of a voice outside is heard.*)

VOICE OUTSIDE. Can I speak to you, ma'am?

JESSICA. No, Nora. I can't talk about dinner now.

VOICE. But, ma'am—

JESSICA. I can't help it—haven't time to eat.

VOICE. I can get a roast—

JESSICA. All right, but don't bother *me* about it.

VOICE. Will Mr. Prendergast—

JESSICA. Mr. Prendergast! Of course he'll be here. Now, Nora, whatever you do, don't let anyone in—I'm out! (*The VOICE murmurs "All right" as JESSICA shuts the door and comes quickly back to her table and her proof sheets. Just as she becomes absorbed the telephone bell jingles*

noisily. JESSICA *impatiently grabbing the receiver, speaks fiercely.*) Hello! (*Hearing the answer her tone changes.*) Oh, hello, Mary. I didn't mean to take your head off, but I'm up to my eyes in work. Couldn't think of it. Bartlett wants his copy in the morning and a matinee is out of the question. Yes, I'm sorry, too. Yes; all right. Good-bye. (*She hangs up the receiver, grabs her head with both hands for a second, then, drawing a long breath, gets back to her work again.*)

Very slowly and slyly DAISY DALRYMPLE *creeps into the room, smiling at her success in getting in. She is a pretty woman of about JESSICA's age, fashionably and correctly dressed for her morning walk. She does not speak until just behind JESSICA, when she leans forward suddenly over JESSICA's shoulder.*

DAISY. Booh!

JESSICA (*startled*). Oh! What a fright you gave me! (*Looking around.*) Daisy! So it's you! Why, how—(*she looks toward the door meaningly*).

DAISY (*turning away with a laugh*). Oh, I was *too* clever about that. Nora was at the door arguing with a very large lady, all frills and feathers. (*Seating herself in a chair a little right of center with a gurgle of appreciation.*) Such a very large person. Well, while Nora was positively telling her she could not come in, I ran up the stoop and slipped by her, just saying, "Hello, Nora!" She did look so astonished and funny. But I was just determined to see you this morning—I simply had to—and no Nora could keep me out. (*She is quite oblivious to JESSICA's dismay.*)

JESSICA. But, Daisy—

DAISY (*airily*). Oh, don't mind me. Go right ahead with what you are doing. I can tell you all about it just the same.

JESSICA (*desperately*). Daisy, I've got to—

DAISY. I know. You wonderful girl. I wish I were half as clever as you are. Isn't it splendid to have so much to do?

JESSICA (*pointedly*). Yes, if you have *time* to do it.

DAISY (*rising and crossing over to JESSICA's chair*). Just

to think. You're writing a whole book. And you're going to send me a copy, of course. And you'll write in it, won't you, "From the author"—

JESSICA (*grimly*). Yes, if I ever get time to finish.

DAISY (*turning away and walking right*). Do you know, you're the first *real* author I ever knew?

JESSICA (*sotto voce*). Lucky authors.

DAISY (*seating herself again*). But that isn't what I came to talk about. Oh, my dear, you could put this in a book. It's so romantic. You ought to put it in this book. (*Hastily*.) But not my real name.

JESSICA (*trying to correct her proofs in spite of the chatter*). Really?

DAISY. Maybe I'd better not tell you *his* name.

JESSICA (*bored*). No, don't, if you'd rather not.

DAISY. What shall I call him? Well, Tom will do. But of course that isn't his name.

JESSICA. Of course not.

DAISY (*comfortably settling herself to talk*). Well, about a year ago—

JESSICA (*sotto voce*). A whole year! Oh, Lord!

DAISY (*mentally calculating so as to be sure of her dates*). Yes, it was all of that—or maybe it was a year and two months. I know, because I had just had that new pink chiffon of mine cleaned, after Joe Brandt spilt his glass of champagne down the front breadth. And, oh, if you had seen it when—

JESSICA (*interrupting*). Yes, I know; but do get to the love-part; for of course it's a love story.

DAISY. Love story! Well, rather. (*She sighs romantically*.) Oh, Jess, you never in your life saw such a clever man!

JESSICA. No? I wish I could.

DAISY. Well, first, you know, he sent me chocolates, then flowers—carnations, then it got to be orchids.

JESSICA. Orchids! He must have had money.

DAISY. Well, no; but I guess he was getting a big salary. Oh, well, it was enough. Well, it went on from orchids to—to—oh, it was the loveliest ring you ever saw!

JESSICA. A ring. Dear me.

DAISY. Yes. Everything was lovely. Aunt Jane liked him, mother liked him—

JESSICA (*swinging around in her chair and facing DAISY with a hope of bringing the interview to an end*). Are—you—going—to—marry—him?

DAISY (*taking the same position in her own chair*). Well, there you are. You see, this is the tragic part of it. There must be some cat of a woman who has come between us.

JESSICA (*facing around to her table again*). Ah! The hated rival! (*She laughs.*)

DAISY (*annoyed*). Well, that isn't any laughing matter.

JESSICA (*amused*). No, a rival generally isn't.

DAISY (*disdainfully*). But you'd hardly call her a rival. She isn't that much account.

JESSICA (*bored*). Oh, then, if she isn't, why—er—(*yawns slightly and picks up her pencil*).

DAISY (*rising and going to her*). Wait—now, you just listen. Let me tell it my own way.

JESSICA (*resignedly laying down her pencil and folding her hands on the table*). All right. Go ahead.

DAISY (*turning away and beginning to walk about the room*). Well, you see, Jack—I mean Tom—

JESSICA (*slightly startled*). Jack!

DAISY. No, I said Tom.

JESSICA (*deciding it is an ordinary name, recovers herself*). Tom will do.

DAISY. Well, this other woman. I could notice it in a hundred little ways. Do you know, it was the most subtle thing—

JESSICA (*with a quizzical look at DAISY*). Are men generally—subtle?

DAISY (*not heeding her*). After he had been—

JESSICA (*nearing the end of her patience, picks up her pencil*). Oh, let him go. He couldn't have cared very much for you—

DAISY. Oh, yes he did, or he wouldn't have been so anxious to make it up.

JESSICA. Oh, was he?

DAISY. Oh, yes. Why, a little over two months ago we met, and, do you know, he just tried to make it all up again. I guess he's pretty tired of the other woman.

JESSICA. Oh, so there *was* another woman. You said—

DAISY. Oh, yes. And you ought to have seen the way I answered him. I let him know I wasn't to be dropped and picked up again just like a last year's necktie. (*She is not looking at JESSICA.*) I just said, "Mr. John Prendergast—"

JESSICA (*startled and aroused at last, gasps*). Prender—Jack!

DAISY (*turning to her*). Why, do you know him? (*Slily.*) Oh, yes, of course; I remember—

JESSICA (*in a tense tone*). That doesn't matter. Go on—go on!

DAISY (*walking about again*). Well, there isn't much more to tell.

JESSICA (*irritably*). I wish you'd sit down and tell it, then. You make me nervous, tramping around like that! (*DAISY scats herself with a sigh. JESSICA rises and begins to move about the room, speaking jerkily as she does so.*) So he wanted to make up, did he?

DAISY. Oh, yes, indeed. That's what I've been telling you—

JESSICA. And you really turned him down?

DAISY. Oh, *didn't* I?

JESSICA. How long ago did you say?

DAISY. I told you—a little over two months ago.

JESSICA (*mentally calculating as she comes a little forward and right of her table*). Oh, you said a—little—over—two months ago.

DAISY. Yes.

JESSICA. Well (*she pretends to laugh*), did he stay turned down?

DAISY. No; that's the romantic part of it. He won't take no for an answer.

JESSICA (*facing her, with complete surprise*). What! He won't?

DAISY. No. Why, just think, no later than yesterday—

JESSICA (*interrupting her with a dawning realization that DAISY is lying*). Yesterday!

DAISY (*nodding*). Hm—m. Yesterday we went for the most gorgeous motor trip—

JESSICA (*amused at DAISY's effrontery, she has entirely recovered herself*). Yesterday! Are you sure? What time was it?

DAISY. Oh, about three o'clock, I should say.

JESSICA. Three!

DAISY. Yes. We motored miles into the country. Oh, until long after six o'clock, and then—

JESSICA (*smiling*). And then?

DAISY. Oh, my dear, such a delightful little supper. And he was the dearest thing

JESSICA (*choking back a laugh*). Yes, he can be.

DAISY. Oh, can't he! (*Suddenly, as if the thought had struck her for the first time*). Why, Jess, I always thought there might be something between you and him—was there?

JESSICA (*beginning to answer*). Why—(*the telephone bell rings. She seats herself in her desk chair and takes down the receiver*). Hello! (*As she hears the answer her tone changes completely to one of tenderness*). Yes, dear. No, not yet. I'm trying to. But, dearest, I can't just now. No, I have company. (*Laughingly*). No, it isn't a man. Yes,—yes. Good-bye, dearest.

DAISY (*who has been listening with increasing interest, rising and going to her*). You sly minx! Who is the man?

JESSICA (*pretending surprise at the suggestion*). Man!

DAISY. Oh, don't deny it. No woman ever talked in that tone to anyone but a man.

JESSICA. You seem to know.

DAISY (*beginning to wheedle*). Don't be mean, Jess. Are you engaged? Who is he?

JESSICA (*pauses, then speaks slowly, watching the effect*). Jack—Prendergast!

DAISY (*gasps*). Jack! You're engaged to him?

JESSICA (*with a meaning which DAISY does not see*). I was.

DAISY. You were! H'm! Then (*a sudden thought*

strikes her). Why, you called him dearest. I heard you.

JESSICA. Did I? Force of habit, I suppose. I am such a creature of habit.

DAISY. Well, there's something queer about it. Women like you don't acquire the habit of calling men—over the telephone—dearest! (*Imitating JESSICA'S tone.*) Just like that.

JESSICA. You're getting to be quite a philosopher as to what women do and don't do.

DAISY. You needn't try to switch the subject to philosophy. (*Suspiciously.*) When did you break it off?

JESSICA. What?

DAISY. The engagement.

JESSICA. Does the time matter so much?

DAISY. Well, I'd just like to know how long it was before—

JESSICA (*teasingly*). Or after.

DAISY. After! Do you suppose I'd have him while he was engaged to—someone else?

JESSICA. That's half the spice of it, isn't it? Hearts have been caught on the rebound, you know.

DAISY. Jessica Reeves! That's horrid of you!

JESSICA (*enjoying the situation*). Is it? But, my dear girl, don't you see? One of us is a—sort of marked-down bargain counter article. Which of us is it?

DAISY (*returning to her chair and sitting suddenly*). Goodness! How perfectly awful! I'm sorry I told you.

JESSICA. Why? We might as well know—for our own satisfaction—which came first.

DAISY. I don't understand why you called him "dearest" over the telephone.

JESSICA (*concealing a smile and pretending not to hear*). Now, the only way is to compare notes. When did he break off with you, and when did you make up?

DAISY. I'll tell you after you tell me.

JESSICA. So you don't think I'll play fair?

DAISY (*who has had just that thought in her mind*). Why, Jess, I never dreamed of such a thing!

JESSICA. Well, go ahead. I promise to tell you the exact truth.

DAISY. Well—you know—it was last summer when we had our first—flirtation.

JESSICA. Oh! Where?

DAISY. Atlantic City.

JESSICA (*who knows better*). Atlan—what month?

DAISY. July. (JESSICA *laughs*.) What are you laughing at?

JESSICA. Aren't you mistaken? He was in—Canada—all of July.

DAISY (*a trifle nonplussed, rising and walking about again*). Oh, well, maybe it was August.

JESSICA (*with quiet enjoyment of the position*). And he was in Michigan in August.

DAISY (*suspiciously*). You seem to be pretty well acquainted with his movements.

JESSICA. Not necessarily. His movements are usually announced in the engineering journals. But go on. You made up again, it would seem, if you went motoring yesterday. When did *that* occur?

DAISY (*vaguely*). Oh, he phoned—in the morning—and—the invitation was so attractive—I had to accept.

JESSICA (*rising and half sitting against the end of the table, facing DAISY*). And that was yesterday—at three, you said?

DAISY. Yes. Now, when did *you* become engaged?

JESSICA (*turning serious, for she does not understand this point herself*). About two months ago.

DAISY (*perking up, she looks pleased and seats herself again with quite an air*). Oh, that was *after* I turned him down, wasn't it, dear?

JESSICA (*annoyed*). I don't—(*telephone bell interrupts. She answers it, still standing*.) Hello! Oh, hello, Jack! Why so soon again? No, not yet. No, it's Daisy Dalrymple. (DAISY *shows some alarm*.) Yes; she's been saying some awfully nice things about you. Yes. She says—(DAISY *risks, motioning to stop JESSICA*). She's been telling me about your engagement to her. Why didn't you tell me?

(*She hears his answer, then turns to DAISY, who has crept close to the telephone.*) Oh, did you hear that? (*Into the telephone.*) That wasn't a nice word you used, Jack. What! You never were engaged! Oh, Jack! Take care. She's listening. Barely know her, eh? I don't think she'd like you to say that. (*To DAISY.*) Don't you want to speak to him?

DAISY (*furiously, moving away*). Never again! Brute!

JESSICA (*into the telephone*). No, she says she doesn't. She's been telling me quite a romantic story. I'm going to make a book of it some day. She wants me to. Yes, all right. Good-bye. (*She hangs up the receiver.*)

DAISY (*angrily, facing her*). I'd like to know what all this means! When did you break off that engagement?

JESSICA (*moving down a little front of the table*). I didn't.

DAISY. You didn't! Then why did you say *were* engaged?

JESSICA. Because. (*She holds out her left hand which is graced with a wedding ring.*)

DAISY (*gasping with astonishment and chagrin*). A wedding ring! You're married—to Jack!

JESSICA (*smiling*). Yes.

DAISY. When?

JESSICA (*facing her directly and speaking slowly and markedly*). Yesterday—afternoon—at four o'clock.

DAISY (*stunned with the neatness with which she has been caught, then trying to wriggle out of it by throwing all the blame on JESSICA*). Well, I think it was simply horrid of you not to tell me before, when—

JESSICA. But, my dear Daisy, you gave me so little chance.

DAISY (*sniffing contemptuously*). Chance! Humph! You could have interrupted me if you wanted to.

JESSICA. Besides, we are not announcing it yet—for reasons connected with my work. So you're really the first to hear.

DAISY (*contemptuously*). Oh, am I? Well, I want to tell you, Jessica Reeves (*spitefully*), or perhaps I ought to

say Mrs. Prendergast—I think you're a horrid cat. Yes, I do.

JESSICA. Cat! Isn't that rather—

DAISY. I said *cat*! I'll never speak to you again—never! The way you led me on, and let me talk—it was the meanest thing—

JESSICA. Oh, but I had to get the little romance—if you want it written, you know.

DAISY (*floouncing toward the door*). Oh!

JESSICA (*following her*). Oh, but you musn't go like that. We must arrange for dinner sometime, as soon as Jack and I have settled down, and have—(*she talks fast and somewhat incoherently so as to finish before DAISY gets quite out.*)

DAISY (*interrupting her as soon as she gets to the door, without waiting for her to finish*). How dare you! Good-bye, Mrs.—Jack—Prendergast! (*She exits in a rage, slamming the door noisily behind her. JESSICA gives a long, low whistle, then sinks laughing into a chair as the curtain falls.*)

CURTAIN.

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| Yankee Peddler, 1 hr..... | 7 | 3 |

VAUDEVILLE SKETCHES, MONOLOGUES, ETHIOPIAN PLAYS.

| | M. | F. |
|--|----|----|
| Ax'in' Her Father, 25 min.... | 2 | 3 |
| Booster Club of Blackville, 25 m. | 10 | |
| Breakfast Food for Two, 20 m. | 1 | 1 |
| Cold Finish, 15 min..... | 2 | 1 |
| Coon Creek Courtship, 15 min. | 1 | 1 |
| Coming Champion, 20 min.... | | 2 |
| Coontown Thirteen Club, 25 m. | 14 | |
| Counterfeit Bills, 20 min..... | 1 | 1 |
| Doings of a Dude, 20 min.... | 2 | 1 |
| Dutch Cocktail, 20 min..... | | 2 |
| Five Minutes from Yell Col- lege, 15 min..... | | 2 |
| For Reform, 20 min..... | 4 | |
| Fresh Timothy Hay, 20 min.. | 2 | 1 |
| Glickman, the Glazier, 25 min. | 1 | 1 |
| Handy Andy (Negro), 12 min. | 2 | |
| Her Hero, 20 min..... | | 1 |
| Hey, Rube! 15 min..... | 1 | |
| Home Run, 15 min..... | 1 | 1 |
| Hot Air, 25 min..... | 2 | 1 |
| Jumbo Jum, 30 min..... | 4 | 3 |
| Little Red School House, 20 m. | 4 | |
| Love and Lather, 35 min..... | 3 | 2 |
| Marriage and After, 10 min.. | 1 | |
| Mischievous Nigger, 25 min.. | 4 | 2 |
| Mistaken Miss, 20 min..... | 1 | 1 |
| Mr. and Mrs. Fido, 20 min.... | 1 | 1 |
| Mr. Badger's Uppers, 40 min. | 4 | 2 |
| One Sweetheart for Two, 20 m. | | 2 |
| Oshkosh Next Week, 20 min.. | 4 | |
| Oyster Stew, 10 min..... | | 2 |
| Pete Yansen's Gurl's Moder, 10 min. | | 1 |
| Pickles for Two, 15 min..... | 2 | |
| Pooh Bah of Peacetown, 35 min. | 2 | 2 |
| Prof. Black's Funnygraph, 15 m. | 6 | |
| Recruiting Office, 15 min.... | 2 | |
| Sham Doctor, 10 min..... | 4 | 2 |
| Si and I, 15 min..... | | 1 |
| Special Sale, 15 min..... | 2 | |
| Stage Struck Ducky, 10 min.. | 2 | 1 |
| Sunny Son of Italy, 15 min.. | 1 | |
| Time Table, 20 min..... | | 1 |
| Tramp and the Actress, 20 min. | 1 | 1 |
| Troubled by Ghosts, 10 min... | 4 | |
| Troubles of Rozinski, 15 min.. | 1 | |
| Two Jay Detectives, 15 min.. | 3 | |
| Umbrella Mender, 15 min.... | | 2 |
| Uncle Bill at the Vaudeville, 15 min. | | 1 |
| Uncle Jeff, 25 min..... | 5 | 2 |
| Who Gets de Reward? 30 min. | 5 | 1 |

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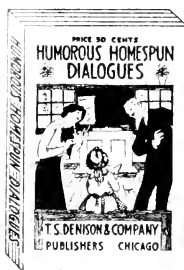
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